

SEBASTIAN;

OR,

The Roman Martyr.

A DRAMA,

FOUNDED ON CARDINAL WISEMAN'S CELEBRATED
TALE OF "FABIOLA."

EX libris **REV. BARDOU.**
BY

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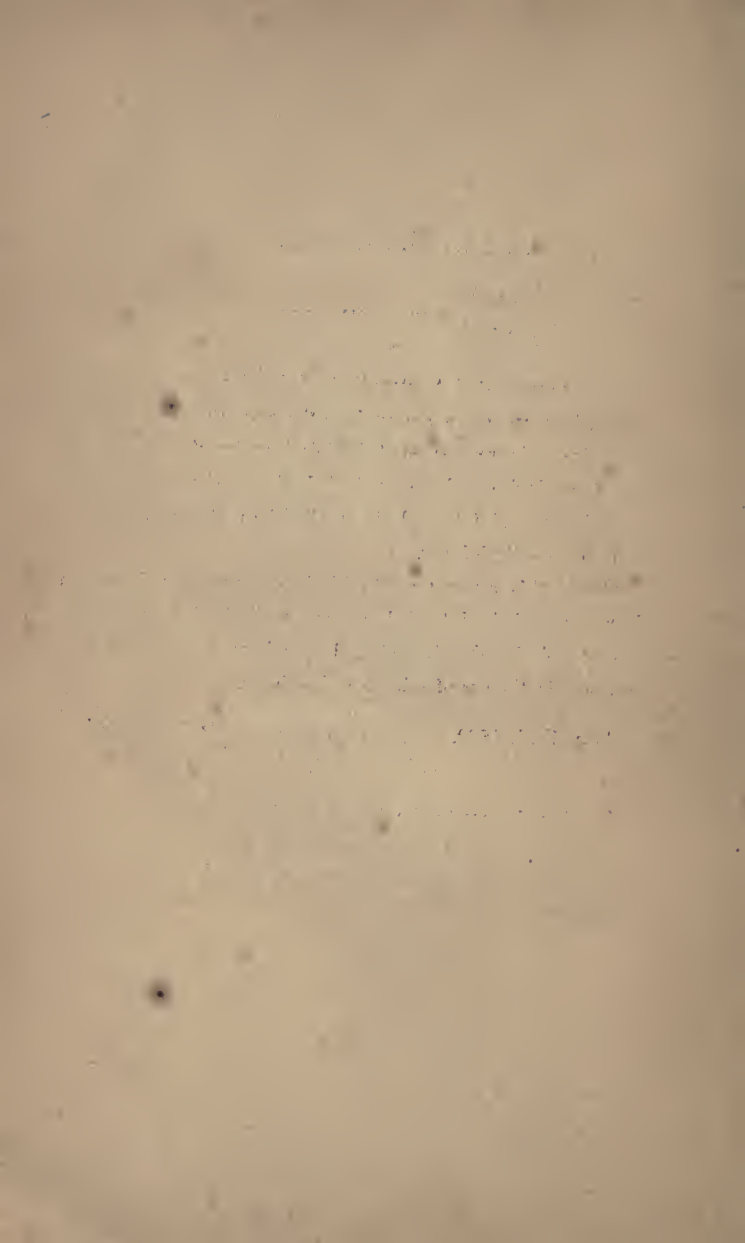
PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

WE are requested to state that "Sebastian," in its present shape, borrows some scenes from the Very Rev. Canon Oakley's dramatic version of "Fabiola," under the same title. The Canon's drama, however, had the female characters, which in "Sebastian," intended for a Christian Brothers' School, were necessarily left out.

Should this attempt meet with favor from those for whom it was especially intended, we are authorized to announce that it will be shortly followed by others, intended in like manner, for the use of schools and colleges.

New York, 1860.

* * A reference to the tale of "Fabiola," and to Smith's "Dictionary of Antiquities," will easily supply hints for the costumes and scenery, where such cannot be otherwise obtained.



PERSONS REPRESENTED.

PAGANS.

MAXIMIAN, Emperor of Rome.

FABIUS, a Roman nobleman.

FULVIUS, a Syrian residing at Rome.

CORVINUS, son of the Prefect of the city.

PROCLUS, a friend of Fabius.

CALPUERNIUS, a pedantic philosopher

HERMAN OR ARMINIUS, a Dacian soldier.

NICOSTRATUS, a magistrate, afterwards converted.

CHRISTIANS.

SEBASTIAN, an officer of the Emperor's guard.

PANCRATIUS, a Christian youth.

QUADRATUS, a centurian in Sebastian's troop.

MARCUS and
MARCELLIANUS, } in prison for the faith.

TRANQUILLINUS, father to Marcus and Marcellianus.

DIOGENES, "fosser" or sexton in the Catacombs.

DIONYSIUS, a priest and physician.

Christians, Citizens, Suitors to the Emperor's Guard, &c.

PROLOGUE.

In a far land, and a much altered age,
We bring the Roman martyrs on the stage,—
Names unfamiliar to the modern ear,
And scenes forgotten we present you here ;
Our heroes taken—not from fields of blood,
Great by the right divine of being good !
Our inspiration drawn from that full fount—
That never fails upon St. Peter's mount.
Amid such scenes we ought to be at home,
For we, too, are the progeny of Rome !
What is the purpose of the mimic scene,
If not to show what may be and what has been ?
How glorious souls spurning the meanest state,
May rise to God the source of all that's great.
Such our bold task—presenting here to-night,
Pancratius and Sebastian to your sight.
The Christian's past, extending dim and far,
Its chancel lighted yet by Bethlehem's star,
Spreads its broad aisles and transepts to our gaze,
Filled with the august forms of other days ;
And who shall enter ? Who shall dare to tread
Among the embers, cross-crowned-bearing dead,
If we may not ? Who see on every hand
The banners of our universal band ?

Who know the legend an't on every shield ?
Whose brethren victors stand on every field ?
Who know the watchword which these saints have given,
When challenged from the battlements of Heaven ?
Shall we not cling unto our glorious past ?
Shall we not seek to show what genuine glory
Lies in the Church's long-neglected story ?
Such is our hope. Yet your own goodness will
Due debit make for our deficient skill.
Those we would show were not of common mould,
The tale we tell is one but seldom told ;
And in the telling or presenting here,
Much cause have such young orators to fear ;
Trembling we come to ask for your applause,
At least you'll judge us kindly—for our cause.

SEBASTIAN;
OR,
THE ROMAN MARTYR.

A DRAMA,
FOUNDED ON CARDINAL WISEMAN'S CELEBRATED
TALE OF "FABIOLA."

ACT. I.

SCENE—A STREET IN ROME.

PANCRATIUS *returning from school with a servant carrying
his rolls of vellum, &c.*

Pancratius. God be praised it's over! And yet I pity him!
I speak of Corvinus. When we got the theme, "that the true
philosopher should die for the truth," I thought only of the
theme and not of the present. In my ardor *truth* became
faith, and Philosopher, *Christian*. My good old master Cas-
sianus—

Enter QUADRATUS.

Quadratus. How, sir scholar, musing aloud in the open street?
How's this?

Pancratius. My friend Quadratus. I was thinking of—

Quad. To-morrow's task.

Panc. No, indeed ; to-day I graduated, and the text was—
Truth ! Oh ! Quadratus, how cold was all I heard and all I
I said, to all I felt. The Christian alone knows truth, has truth
—should talk of truth.

Quad. Hush ! we are in the street, remember, and just at this
time it is very unsafe to mention the name of Christian. You
maintained your theme.

Panc. Yes, and have had the trial of it upon me. You
know Corvinus, son of Tertullus the Prefect. A dull boy—
but not his fault, poor fellow. Well, he lost his honors, as
he always does ; then he followed me out of school—taunted
me to fight—called me a base cowardly slave ; said—he said
Quadratus (oh ! I cannot repeat it !)

Quad. What said he, my dear boy ?

Panc. Said we Christians (oh ! think of it !) worshipped an
ass's head. That our God was a common thief—an impostor
crucified for His crime against the Emperor. My blood boiled
to hear such blasphemies. But—

Quad. Go on, go on.

Panc. A moment roused me. I stood, and then I thought
of Our Dear Lord in cruel Caiphas's house, and all He bore
and then my blood fled back. But he—he struck me—fiercely
in the face, and the whole crowd of boys cheered when he
struck me—

Quad. And you ?

Panc. With a great effort to keep down my arm, and con-
scious of the cause for which I stood, and His commands, I

said: "God pardon you, Corvinus," and turned away. Cassianus overtook me, but I begged him not to pursue Corvinus for the assault. You know he knew no better. So Cassianus promised—

Quad. My noble boy! this day you have proved well worthy of your immortal father's blood. But haste thee home. They are all anxious for thee, and I must see Sebastian who waits for me. To-day we attend the Emperor. Fare thee well. We'll meet soon—very soon.

SCENE—A HALL IN THE HOUSE OF FABIUS.

FABIUS, CALPURNIUS, PROCULUS, FULVIUS, and SEBASTIAN.

Fabius. In three years the Thermæ of the divine Dioclesian completed, in three years, didst say? It's impossible; I looked in at the works on my way to Sallust's garden the other day, and found that very little progress had been made since last year. A great deal of heavy work has to be done, such as carving marbles and shaping columns. The thing is impossible.

Fulvius. But I know that orders have been sent in every quarter to forward hither all prisoners and persons condemned to the mines in Spain, Sardinia, and even Chersonesus. A few thousand Christians alone are wanted to do the work.

Sebastian. And why Christians, may I ask, more than others?

Fulv. O, I can hardly say. But so it is, that one Christian workman is as good as fifty others.

Fabius, Calpurnius, Proculus. (*At once.*) Indeed! Pray how, Fulvius?

Fulv. O, they are so active, orderly, and obedient. Other

convicts require to be driven to their work by the lash, but the Christians are quite different. I have seen with my own eyes, in Asia, young patricians whose hands had evidently never handled a pick-axe, nor their shoulders borne a weight, how they did work so willingly, nay, cheerfully withal ; I don't mean that the lash was not properly applied to them ; for you know that our divine Emperor wills that if exceptions be made in the case of the Christians, they should be on the side of rigor, not indulgence, so justly anxious is the divine Dioclesian that every possible hindrance should be placed in the way of that accursed sect.

Seb. Well, I own this kind of justice does not commend itself to me. But what a strange race these Christians must be ! Is any credible account given of this extraordinary stupidity or insensibility ?

Proc. Come, Calpurnius, you are learned in the history of those Christians. Do, pray, enlighten us, and answer the natural question of Sebastian.

Calp. Know, then, most noble friends, that the Christians are a foreign sect, the founder of which flourished many ages ago in Judea. His doctrines were brought to Rome in the time of Vespasian, by two brothers named Peter and Paul. Some contend that these brothers were the same whom the Jews call Moses and Aaron, the second of whom sold his inheritance for a kid, the skin of which he wanted to make hand-gloves. But this tradition I reject, since 'tis recorded in the mystical books of the Jews that the younger of these brothers, seeing that the others' victims gave better omens than his own, slew him (as our own Romulus did Remus), but with the jaw-bone

of an ass, for which he was hung by King Mordochæsus of Macedon, upon a gibbet 50 cubits high, at the suit of their sister Judith. Be this as it may, Peter and Paul, as I said, coming to Rome, the former was discovered to be a fugitive slave of Pontius Pilate, and was crucified by his master's orders on the Janiculum. Their followers (who are numerous) make the cross their symbol, and think it their proudest dignity to suffer stripes, imprisonment, and even death, believing that this is the best mode of getting to some pleasant place above the clouds.

Seb. O, the booby!

Proc. Well, the report then is that the Thermæ will soon be completed, and then we shall have glorious sport.

Fulv. O yes, magnificent. But we shan't have to wait any longer. Already orders have been sent to Numidia for an immense supply of lions and leopards, to be ready against winter. A brave soldier like you, Sebastian, must be delighted with the glorious spectacle of the amphitheatre, especially when directed against the enemies of the Emperor and of the republic which you so faithfully serve.

Seb. Fulvius, I should ill deserve your character of me, could I view with any satisfaction the struggle (if it deserve the name) between a brute beast and a helpless child or woman. I see nothing great or noble in such spectacles. No; I will ever be ready to draw my sword to defend the princes of the state in a just war; but I would as soon sheathe it in the heart of the lion or leopard that should spring, even by Imperial order, on the innocent and defenceless. Nay, Fulvius, do not start. I am not the first Roman, nor the noblest, who

has broached these sentiments. Remember the words of Cicero: "Magnificent are the games, no doubt, but what delight can it be to a refined mind to see either a feeble man torn by a powerful beast, or a noble animal pierced through by a javelin?" I am content to be on the side of the greatest of Roman orators.

Fulv. Then, Sebastian, we are never to see you in the amphitheatre?

Seb. If you do, rely upon it, it will be upon the side of the defenceless.

Fab. Well, most noble guests, I have no doubt that the pure and truthful Phalernian will help us to settle our disputes on this high question. I have a word to say to my daughter, and will join you in the triclinium before dinner is served. Fulvius will represent me till I come.

ACT II.

SCENE—A TERRACE LOOKING TOWARDS THE COLLISEUM
—MOONLIGHT.

Enter SEBASTIAN and PANCRATIUS.

Sebastian. O, what a lovely night! See how the moon,
Careering o'er the azure firmament,
Bathes tow'r and arch and yonder amphitheatre
In its delicious light.

Pancratius. Sebastian, methinks Heaven's palace must
Be bright indeed. If e'en this nether side of its magnificence,
Which God reveals to lure our aching sight

From earth's corruption, and her scenes of woe,
To things supernal, show so passing fair.

Seb. A goodly thought, Pancratius, and true.
Thin is the veil, nor hard to penetrate,
Which severs us, pledg'd warriors of the cross,
From that bright church above.

Panc. Thin is that veil,
Methinks e'en while we speak, Sebastian,
Mine eye discerns the very aperture,
Which through the flimsy texture of this web,
Reveals the golden field that lies beyond.

Seb. What! in the spangled sky?

Panc. No, nearer home;
Seest thou the Flavian pile, as the bright moon
Pencils in outline clear, its hundred arches?

Seb. Well, dearest friend.

Panc. Each of these opening arches,
Which leads the martyr to his ready crown,
Is but a veil, thin as the spider's work,
'Twixt us and those who wait for us. But hark!

(The roaring of wild beasts is heard.)

Seb. That was a lion's roar from underneath the Coelien.
'Tis the trumpet-note, Pancratius, which summons us to battle;
nay, the pœan that hymns our victory.

Panc. These are sounds, Sebastian,
Which warn us that our trial time is brief.
Lend me your ear, my faithful friend and counsellor;
I have a word to say.

Seb. What weighty matter

Prompts you to seek my sage advice ?

Panc. Oh ! nothing

Of note to one of your experienced eye,

Howbeit of moment to a boy like me.

You know, Sebastian, I have stores at home

Of jewels, plate and other patrimony ;

Ill suited to our simple way of life,

And ne'er to pass in heritage to others :

For that my name and race end with

My life. Sebastian, you have told me how

The poor were heirs of property unclaimed by kin.

Well, I would make the poor my heritors

By gift, not legacy ; you understand me ?

And then if persecution come, and Lictors

Invade our dwellings and purloin our goods,

Mine shall escape the spoiler's hand, secure

Where God would have them.

Seb. I have heard thee out,

Dear boy, that the proposal might be all

Thine own. Of course Lucina knows.

Panc. Oh, yes ;

I would not sequester a grain of dust

Without my mother's cognizance. But now,

Dear Sebastian, do help me chose a place

Far from my home, where of my little store

Fit distribution may be made, and say

That one who needs the suffrages of all,

But chiefly of the poor, asks a return

Of prayers for alms ; but as you love me, brother,

Breathe not my name.

Seb. I serve you with delight,
My noble-hearted boy. But stay, I hear footsteps without.
Await me here a moment. (*Exit.*)

Panc. (*Pacing up and down.*) Strange changes show themselves on every side. Even our fearless, frank Sebastian, the pride and model of all Roman soldiership, seems full of care, less for himself than others—

A noble gravity is throned upon his brow. O, what a man is there !

But he returns.

Re-enter SEBASTIAN.

Sebastian. Plotters and plots on every side we turn,
In the State's name, against our holy faith.
Alas ! they little know how very needful
That faith is for the saving of the State.

Pancratius. Troublesome times are coming.

Seb. Are come, Pancratius. This reminds me that I have an errand of charity to accomplish. You know Marcus and Marcellianus ?

Panc. What of them ?

Seb. They have been sentenced to death on a charge of being Christians. Their parents have got about them through favor of the authorities, who want, of course, to bring them round ; and I am told that, poor fellows, they are wavering. My position, you know, in the palace, makes me acquainted with all such matters. I shall get admission to them in the house of Nicostratus the magistrate, to which they have been taken from the prison, and try to steady them.

Panc. O, may God be with you !

Seb. Well, Pancratius, you have given me your blessing ;
now follow me with your prayers. (*Exit on opposite sides.*)

SCENE II.—THE HALL OF THE LATERAN PALACE.

MAXIMIAN *seated.* *The prefects of Gaul, Spain, Italy, Sicily, Rome, and on either hand pagan priests, orators, suitors, &c. CALPURNIUS, FULVIUS and CORVINUS among the crowd. SEBASTIAN with his guard at the entrance.*

Maximian. Prefects and priests ! My speech, you full well know, is short and plain. We have called you here to frame directions how to extirpate the hateful Christian sect. None but ourselves and you know of our meeting.

(SEBASTIAN *leans carelessly on his sword.*)

Therefore be brief. And what you do devise
I swear by my great namesake, Hercules,
To execute in blood, aye, to the last drop
That flows in Christian veins throughout the West.
Ye priests speak first.

1st Priest. Divine Maximian ! The Loire has overflowed,
Deluged your divinity's temple,
Since first the Christians came amongst us.

2nd Priest. An earthquake in our Attica !
Has shaken thrice great Hermes from his base.

3rd Priest. The barbarians menace us in far Illyria,
Led on, 'tis clear, by Christian fugitives.

4th Priest. A pestilence ravages Catania,
Imported by the Christians from the East.

Calpurnius. (Rising slowly.) Most august Maximian,
And reverend Fathers ! Fellow-citizens
And lovers of divine philosophy ! I have perused
The very books in which the lore is writ
Of this accursed sect. Nay, in many vigils
Have, with much labor, penetrated even into
The mysteries of their Jewish ancestors.
Let me unfold their progress and designs—
The Jews, their fathers, under Philadelphus,
Forestalled the corn of Egypt in a famine,
And sought to send it home clandestinely ;
But Philadelphus, seizing on their chiefs,
Twelve brothers by one mother, did condemn them
To take the well-threshed straw of the same corn
And make it into bricks to build a city.
Demetrius Phalerius, a lover of all learning,
And learned men—shut up in a tower—
Moses and Aaron, having shaved their beards
Nor let them forth, until they had written down
In good Ionic Greek, the mysteries
Of all their race. These volumes I have read,
And there their bloody deeds are full confest.
The sword, when numerous, was their only creed—
To slay—exterminate—all races else—
This was the Christian creed. For it is plain
The Jews were Christians with another name.
Under their high priests, they at this moment
Plot against Rome, and yearn to burn us all,
With all we have, aye, in the very Forum,
Including even the august Emperor ! (*Great sensation.*)

Max. For my part let me say—

My reasons for detesting them are different.

They have dared to set up here, in this city,

A God unknown to us ; a rite unbound

By any ties of bondage to the State.

To style their chief by our imperial title,

Pontifex Maximus, they teach divided duties,

And therefore they are traitors.

I hate this sacerdotal claim to sway

My subjects' wills. I would rather far

Find a bold rival plucking at my sceptre

Than brook a supreme pontiff here in Rome !

(Immense applause. Cries of long live the divine MAXIMIAN.)

Max. Prefect of Rome ! Whom do you propose

To execute the orders we will frame

For the city and Campania ?

Prefect. (Kneeling and beckoning to CORVINUS.) Here is my
son, my liege—

Max. (Laughing.) Per Jove ! the very fellow.

Why, Prefect, what an ugly son you have !

One may read scape-grace in his very face.

Howbeit, he'll do. You sirrah, you Corvinus,

See you make clean work of it.

I pay well both ways—by cash and lash.

No bungling tricks with me. Your head will answer

For your hands' offence. Begone. *(Exit CORVINUS.)*

(FULVIUS moves partly across the stage.)

Max. Ho ! my Eastern argus ! You've been sometimes
employed, and paid—well paid—in ferreting out traitors ; yet

none have come to light. Now mark! Here's Christian game enough on every side. Be diligent, or else beware my anger. The convicts' wealth will be divided between the accuser and the treasury. Now go! (Exit.)

SCENE III.—A STREET IN ROME.

Enter FULVIUS and CORVINUS in conversation.

Fulvius. There is no doubt, then, about the news?

Corvinus. None in the world. The people have risen in Numidia, and burned the church, as they call it, of the Christians. My father heard it this morning from the Emperor's secretary himself.

Fulv. What fools those Christians are. What ever could induce them to go and build one of their temples in the most conspicuous part of the metropolis! Why, they might have known that, sooner or later, the religious spirit of the nation would rise against them and destroy the nuisance. What empire can tolerate the importation of a foreign religion?

Corv. Why that is just what my father the prefect is always saying. If these Christians had any sense they would hide themselves and go into corners when they are so condescendingly tolerated, from time to time, by the most humane princes. However, I own I am not sorry. If they will build their temples in public places let them take the consequences. One may gain some notoriety, and profit into the bargain, by hunting down these audacious intruders, and, if possible, destroying them.

Fulv. Be it so. But now to come to the point. It is under-

stood that when we can find out who are Christians among the rich, there shall be a fair division of the spoils between us. You have your bold and rough way of doing things—I have mine. But each shall get his due share of the profits. It is so, is it not ?

Corv. Precisely.

Enter FABIVS.

Fabius. Ha ! Fulvius, how are you ? I have not seen you this age. Come and sup with me to-day ; I have people at my house. And your friend, too—Corvinus, I believe—(*CORVINUS makes an awkward bow*)—I hope he will accompany you.

Fulvius. Thanks ; but I fear I am engaged.

Fab. Nonsense, man ; we two are all that are left in the city who are good company for each other. Has my house the plague in it, that you have never once entered it since that evening when you met Sebastian and got into a quarrel with him ? Or was it some magical charm that struck you dead that fatal day ?

Fulv. In truth I believe it was.

Fab. Well, well, come and we shall try and break the spell over a bottle.

Fulv. With all my heart !

ACT III.

SCENE I.—A LARGE HALL IN THE HOUSE OF NICOSTRATUS
LIGHTED FROM A SINGLE OPENING IN THE ROOF.

NICOSTRATUS, CLADIUS, TRANQUILLINUS, MARCUS, MARCEL-
LIANUS *and other prisoners, officers, &c.*

Marcus. O, spare us, spare us, father, such a test;
This cruel love of yours will break our hearts,
Too rudely torn already by the strife
'Twixt duty and affection.

Tranquillinus. O, my sons,
Talk not of duty now; what duty prompts ye
To tamper with such a boon as life,
That precious jewel, given us to preserve
At the cost of liberty, light, comfort, ease,
And all that men hold dearest? To renounce
For an opinion, haply but a dream,
A treasure in possession. Duty urge
To scorn a father's most imperious word,
A mother's burning tear! By all the love
Ye bear us,—by those most resistless pleas,
Childhood's sweet memories, youth's sparkling joy,
The voice of parents and the thoughts of home,
O, leave us not, dear children of our care,
Hope of our failing age! Come, quit these chains.

Mar. Thus far you have prevailed.

(CLADIUS *takes off their chains.*)

Enter SEBASTIAN.

Sebastian. Hail, holy brothers,
Servants and soldiers of the glorious Cross,
Prisoners of Him who, to deliver us,
Bore chains, and stripes, and ignominious death ;
Whose limbs are furrowed by his galling bonds ;
Who share the foretaste of His pangs, and soon
Shall drink His saving chalice to the dregs.
'Twere meet that on my knees I did you homage,
And craved your prayers, instead of greeting you
With words of exhortation, dare I say
Of stern reproof? Ah! no, it cannot be,
While angel hands are weaving the last flowers
Of your victorious crowns, that ye have bid them
Pause in their work, and 'gin untwine those wreaths,
And turn to dust the blossoms cull'd for you ;
That you, whose feet are even upon the threshold
Of the bright, beaming courts of Paradise,
Can dream of drawing back to tread once more
This land of exile and this vale of tears !
I note that blush. O, brothers! Can ye quail
Before a worm like me, yet face the frown
Of Him ye would deny in words, the while
Your heart abhorreth to indorse the lie ?
Ye who deny Him before men shall be
By Him denied before the angelic host.
Then will ye stand before that judgment seat,
Not confessors as now, but palt'ring cowards,

Who for a few years of earthly bliss
Have sold your palms, and crawled like grovelling worms
To meet your Judge's eye, when ye might spring
With eagle flight to his embrace.

Tranquillinus. Sir !

Whoever thou art, in pity spare thy words.
My sons deserve not at thy hands these thorns
Of sharp rebuke. 'Twas to their mother's tears
And my command, and to no torturing threat,
They bow'd submissive. Filial duty 'twas,
Not cowardice, that tamed their stubborn wills.
Why should they leave to hopeless misery
Their age-worn parents ? Call you this religion ?

Seb. Forbear awhile, my good old man ; leave me
To argue with thy sons. They have a key
To ope the meaning of my speech, which thou,
From chance, not malice, lackest. Noble friends,
Well hath your father said, 'twas filial love,
Not cowardice, that shook your firm resolve.
I know it. Ye forget His words, who saith ;
“ They are not meet to be my followers who
Love parents more than me.” O, hearts unwise !
Deem ye your loss shall be your parents' gain ?
That Heaven's gate ye can unbar to them
Who shut it on yourselves ? Or nerve their arm
To bear the Cross you rudely fling away ?
O, if ye seek to win for them the prize,
Stretch forth your hands and grasp it manfully.

Yea, let your blood cry clam'rous from the ground
For their salvation.

Marcus and Marcellianus. Hold, Sebastian, hold !
We are resolved. (*To the gaoler.*) Cladius, put on our chains,
And thou, Nicostratus, give instant word
For execution to be done. Farewell, father.

Tranq. No, we part no more.
Go tell Chromatius I am now a Christian.
Father and son shall share a common death.

Nicostratus. Thou must depart, Sebastian. I revere
Thy zeal and noble recklessness of cost,
And honor that faith which makes thee play the hero,
And to deeds of daring nerves thy youthful comrades ;
But stern duty calls and leaves no place for pity.

Seb. Say, Nicostratus,
Dost not thou, too, believe ?

Nicos. No, no, Sebastian !
I lack some evidence more cogent still
E'n than the lustre of thy constancy.

Seb. Well, patience. You will see, aye, and believe.
Your time will come, at least I pray it will,
And you'll be one of us, Nicostratus !

SCENE II—THE FORUM—NIGHT.

Enter CORVINUS with a board on which is nailed a sheet of parchment inscribed in large letters. He looks round, then affixes the board to a pillar and calls the sentinel on guard.

Corvinus. Arminius !

Sentinel. Here.

Corv. See you this board?

Sent. Right well.

Corv. You'll guard it at your peril. Look you now, if any one dare insult it do your duty. 'Tis death to him that scorns it; death to him that lets it suffer scorn. You understand me?

Sent. I am your servant.

Corv. Mark you well, Arminius,

"Numen Imperatorum," that's the watchword.

Dost catch it?

Sent. Yea.

Corv. Then say it after me.

Sent. No-o-men Imperatorum.

Corv. Right. Farewell.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE—THE HOUSE OF DIOGENES.

DIOGENES *and his two boys.* A knock is heard. Enter PANCRATIUS *and* QUADRATUS.

Diogenes. Come in, my young masters.

Quadratus. Thank you, sir!

We came to sup with you, but not just yet;

We have an errand in your neighborhood,

And when 'tis done we'll join you at your meal.

Here, Decius! take this purse and cater for us;

We'll treat while we are treated.

Pancratius. Good Diogenes,

I've heard Sebastian say you knew, when young,

That glorious youth, Laurentius. Is it so?

Diog. Twice twenty years are gone, my son,
Since that brave deacon gave his life for Christ.
Ah ! 'twas a goodly youth, so mild, so sweet,
So fair and yet so gracious. O, how they cherished him.
I saw him when the venerable Pontiff
Was led to death, and heard him meekly chide
The valiant Pope, e'en as a son his father,
And crave him not to leave his Minister,
Who oft had served him in that better sacrifice
By Christ accomplished and by priest renewed.

Panc. Ah ! those were goodly times, Diogenes.
Think'st thou, Quadratus, we shall see the like ?

Quad. Perhaps we may, Pancratius. Where's the will
To suffer, there the way is ever plain.

Panc. But tell me how he died, Diogenes ;
Was't not terrific ?

Diog. Ah, yes ! but full of joy.
Out of the fire which bar'd his tender flesh
He raised himself, and looked as though he saw
Some vision in the sky, the like of that
Which cheered his fellow-deacon, holy Stephen.
The flames grew fiercer still ; but when they reached
His beauteous head they shot their light before them,
Forerunner of their course ; and as it shone,
Circling his head, it seemed a pendant crown
Dropped from the opening heavens. Methinks,
My son, thou wouldst have joy'd to share his lot.

Panc. In truth,
Diogenes, I would ; but he was strong,

A noble hearted deacon, I a boy.

Think'st thou, Quadratus, that with bounteous hand

Our Lord gives strength in measure of our needs ?

I have a willing heart ; will that suffice ?

Quad. Yes, yes, Pancratius, God will give thee strength

Who gives the will. But to our evening's work.

Wrap close, my boy ; it is an angry night.

Now, good Diogenes, refresh the fire,

And let the feast attend our speedy coming.

We shall be back right soon.

Diog. Heaven go with you !

*(Exeunt QUADRATUS and PANCRATIUS. DIOGENES
makes the fire and prepares the table. After an
interval a knock is heard.)*

Enter SEBASTIAN.

Sebastian. Thanks be to God !

Diogenes. Noble Sebastian, welcome !

Seb. And you, Diogenes ; your little home
Looks cheerily to-night. The wind and rain
Are in a league against us, gadabouts.

Diog. 'Tis something strange to see your nobleness
Abroad so late. Howbeit, a joyful prodigy.

Seb. O, I'm on duty still. My brave centurion,
Quadratus, is a roaming, and I come
To track his truant steps. He's out, they tell me,
With that sly boy, Pancratius. I suspect me
They're at some holy mischief.

Diog. Never fear.

Two nobler, gentler youths I have not known,
 And I am hovering on four score; I've seen
 Full many in my day of either sort.
 But for the birds whereof you come in quest,
 Your nobleness, good fowler that you are,
 Hath well conjectured of their lurking place.
 'Tis scarce five minutes since they went,
 Brave youths, to do some work whereof they spoke not,
 More than to shadow forth the bare intent,
 The while they bade me make a winter's fire and
 Quickened the repast. O, here they are.

*Re-enter PANCRATIUS with a roll of parchment crumbled up in
 his hand, and QUADRATUS.*

Pancratius. Hurrah, my brave boys, a prize, a prize!

All. (Gathering around him.) Let's see what you have got,
Pancratius.

Panc. The Edict, to be sure, as large as life.

All. Edict? What Edict?

Panc. That against the Christians.

Look at the great big letters how they flare—

“Death,” “Confiscation,” all that sort of thing.

Do take a last good look at it, my boys.

(Reads.) “Our Lords the Emperors: Their high Divinities
 Decree, Command,” et cetera. Here it goes. Let's see *(holds
 it over the lamp)* if it will burn. *(SEBASTIAN stands aloof.)*

Seb. Dear friends, this time your zeal hath stole a march on
 your discretion. Did ye well to seize it?

Panc. But who could bear to see the ugly thing

Glaring and staring in the public way,
And think of all its lies and blasphemies.
Was it so very wrong, Sébastian ?

Seb. Well,

You've picked a quarrel with the world,
And now must bear the brunt. 'Tis not for me to chide ye.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE—THE FORUM AS BEFORE—SUNRISE—THE SEN-
TINEL ON GUARD.

Enter CORVINUS, who looks up at the pillar.

Corvinus. Where is the Edict, sirrah ?

Sentinel. What Edict,

An't please you, Captain ?

Corv. That which yesternight

I set up here !

Sent. E'en where you left it, Captain.

Corv. Look up, you dolt. Where is it ?

Sent. There's the board ;

What want you more ?

Corv. 'Tis not the board, you blockhead.

I want the writing you had to guard.

Sent. Why, look you, Captain, as to writing you see I bee's
no scholar. But it rained all night ; mayhap 'tis washed away.

Corv. And as it blew, mayhap the parchment blew away !
Mean'st that ?

Sent. Exactly so.

Corv. Come, sirrah, this is no joke.

Tell me at once, came any one last night ?

Sent. No, sir, no one.

Corv. No one ?

Sent. No one, but two.

Corv. Two what ?

Sent. Wizards or worse, an't please you, Captain.

Corv. No trifling, sirrah ! Tell me what they were,
And what they did ?

Sent. One was a stripling, sir,
Lanky and tall ; and he went round the pillar,
And maybe whisked the parchment off while I
Was arguing with the other.

Corv. Who was he ?

Sent. Thor or Thor's next of kin. Ye gods, what strength.

Corv. How did he prove his strength ?

Sent. He came and chatted
Quite unconcerned ; ask'd me if I felt it cold ;
Said it was very cold ; when all at once
It struck me that I had to run my spear
Right through his body.

Corv. And why did you not ?

Sent. Because he would not let me, sir. I told him
To get himself away or I would spear him,
And then I drew and stretched my javelin out,
When all at once he twitch'd it from me, snapped it
As though't had been a juggler's wooden sword,
And dashed the iron head-piece in the ground,
There where you see it, fifty paces off.

Corv. But why not use your sword ? Where is your sword ?

Sent. There, don't you see it shining on the tiles

Of yonder building, all in the morning sun ?

Corv. How did it get there, booby ? Answer me ;
Don't look so like a fool ?

Sent. He, that is, it,
(For sure 'twas ne'er a thing of flesh and blood)
Charm'd it away by some outlandish trick,
And pitch'd it up on yonder roof as nimbly
As I might throw a quoit.

Corv. What did he next ?

Sent. He and the lad that came from round the pillar
Walk'd off quite friendly in the dark.

Corv. (*Aside.*) There is one,
And one alone, could do that feat of strength.
(*To the sentinel.*) A pretty story, troth, for the Emperor's ear !
But tell me, sirrah ! did you give alarm
And speed the other guards in quest of them ?

Sent. Not I, for reasons manifold. Know, first,
That the Dacians fight a fellow-creature bravely ;
But as for hobgoblins, they'll not stir an inch.
And then, what use ? The board you bade me watch
I saw safe and sound, just where you left it.

Corv. O, you barbarian ! This shall told the Emperor.
The punishment is death.

Sent. For what ?

Corv. For what ?
For letting one come up and parley with you
Without the watchword.

Sent. But he gave the watchword.

Corv. Then 'twas no Christian.

Sent. Yes, he came and said
Nomen Imperatorum.

Corv. What! The word
Was Numen.

Sent. Nomen, Numen, what's the odds?
My name is Herman, in your speech, Arminius.
Arminius Herman, Nomen Numen; well,
One's like the other. How can I, a Dacian,
Learn all your pretty niceties of speech?

Corv. We'll settle this before the Emperor.
Your crime is capital; and he, you know,
Not apt to take excuses.

Sent. Why, look you now,
There's not a hair to choose betwixt us. You,
Herr Krumbiner, were bound as much as I
To see that, what d'ye call it? *board* in order.

Corv. 'Tis true, I was. So we must coin a story
That you were mastered by an armed force
And butcher'd at your post. Leave that to me.
Take ill and go in quarters for a month;
I'll see you're sated with Illyrian beer,
And when the storm blows over we'll shake hands.
(*Aside.*) That boy Pancratius did it, and shall suffer.
O, sweet revenge; the hour is almost come
That speeds me to renown, and him to doom!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—THE ANTONIAN THERMÆ

CALPURNIUS *reading on one side. A group of citizens conversing loudly.*

1st Citizen. A strange affair this of the edict.

2nd Citizen. Horrible!

3rd Citizen. Treason, rank treason against the divine Emperors!

1st Cit. How was it done, think you?

3rd Cit. Have you not heard? Why the sentinel was found dead with seven and twenty stabs in his breast, nineteen of which were mortal.

2nd Cit. No, that was a false report. The Christians did it all by their diabolical witchcraft. It appears the sentinel was walking up and down on his post, humming a Dacian song, when two women—both witches—came on him unawares. One he struck at with his spear, but it passed through her and quivered in the earth beyond. The other he stoutly attacked with his sword, but he might as well have hacked at marble. She threw a pinch of snuff upon him, thus—*(makes a gesture)*—when he flew into the air, and was found this morning fast asleep on the roof of the palace.

All. Wonderful! Wonderful!

2nd Cit. True, I assure you. A friend of mine, being out

early this morning, saw the very ladder by which the Dacian was taken down !

3rd Cit. I can hardly credit it. Come, Calpurnius, put by that old book and tell us is there any such thing as this Christian power, which can make men fly through the air.

(*Enter SEBASTIAN, who remains in the back ground.*)

Calpurnius. Ahem ! My excellent friends, it is not impossible. What says Pythagoras ? That the element of air Preponderates over the other three elements In certain vegetables, as pulse and lentels.

Concedo ! These airy vegetables being gathered when the sun is in Libra,

(Which sign hath a tendency to balance all earthly things,)

In conjunction with the winged God, Mercury ,

These vegetables, I say, energized by a skillful sorcerer,

Pulverized in a mortar made of an aerolite or flying stone,

Would, doubtless, when rightly used, enable or compel

A person to fly into the air. The witches in Thessaly—

1st. Cit. But we speak of the Christians, most learned Calpurnius.

Calp. We are coming to the Christians, my worthy friend. The process of ratiocination must not be irregularly arrested. There is a case in point, directly in point, Concerning these same Christians. It is quite certain That here in Rome a certain Simon Peter, Or Simon Magus (both titles of one and the same person), Actually in public flew up into the air, But his talisman slipping from his belt, He fell and broke his legs, for which reason

He was subsequently crucified, head downward,
Under the deified Nero.

2nd Cit. Are all Christians magicians ?

Calp. Necessarily ! They believe their priests can forgive sins
And render infants immortal by bathing them in charmed water,
With a thousand other absurdities.

1st Cit. No wonder the edicts are so severe against them.

2nd Cit. They ought to be destroyed off the face of the earth !

(SEBASTIAN *comes forward.*)

3rd Cit. They ought to be destroyed ! What think you,
Sebastian ?

Sebastian. That if they are as bad as Calpurnius says
They ought to be destroyed. But even so
I would gladly give them one chance.

1st Cit. And what might that be ?

Seb. That no one should be allowed to join in their perse-
cution who was not purer than they ;

That no adulterer, extortioner, deceiver,

No drunkard, no bad husband, son or father,

No profligate, no thief, should be taken in testimony against
them. For of none of these crimes does any one
accuse the Christians.

—But pardon me ; I was on my way elsewhere.

(*Exit* SEBASTIAN.)

1st Cit. The day is weaning. I must be off also. (*Exit.*)

All. And we, too.

Calp. And I, too. (*Moves off.*)

(*Exeunt.*)

Enter FULVIUS.

Fulvius. Ha! Calpurnius, well met!

Whither do you go? Have you heard the news?

Calpurnius. Excellent Fulvius, I have heard certain tidings,
But whether there are others which I have not heard
Really I cannot determine till I learn their import.

Fulv. One of the persons who tore down the edict is taken!

Calp. Indeed! Already?

Fulv. Yes, by Corvinus, and safely lodged in prison.

A desperate young villain, I hear.

Ca'p. His name, excellent Fulvius?

Fulv. Pancratius! Of a patrician family, too.

But I have not a moment. Farewell! (*Exit* FABIVS.)

Calp. Vale! Vale! (*Exit* CALPURNIVS.)

SCENE II.—A CHAMBER IN THE PALACE.

MAXIMIAN *and the Prefect of Rome.* MAXIMIAN *striding up
and down furiously.*

Maximian. Where is your booby of a son?

Prefect. Humbly waiting your divinity's pleasure without,
To implore your divinity's forbearance
For the misfortune which has befallen him.

Max. Fortune! Fortune! His own stupidity!
His own cowardice! But he shall smart for it.
Bring him in.

*(The Prefect goes out and returns with CORVINUS, who
kneels at the Emperor's feet. See "Fabiola," p. 236.)*

Max. Come, sirrah, stand up. Answer me quickly.
How did the edict disappear?

Corvinus. Sire! Sire! The sentinel—a simple soldier—
Was on his beat to guard it. I gave him the word—
Numen Imperatorum—but not knowing Latin,
Two men, or rather a man and youth,
Came past by night; he called them and they
Answered *Nomen Imperatorum*. The
Sentinel confounded one with the other,
And so, may it please your divinity—

Max. It does not please me, blockhead.
Why did you put such a sentinel on guard?
Lictors advance. Bind your fasces!

Corv. Mercy! mercy! Spare my life, my liege;
I have important information—

Max. Your life! Who wants your worthless life?
Lictors, put up your axes. The rods are good enough for him.
Bind him. Give him a dozen.

(*They bind and flog CORVINUS. See page, as above,
for description of the process.*)

Corv. Mercy! mercy! Oh! oh!

Max. Another dozen. How he writhes. Ha! ha! ha!

Corv. Oh! oh! oh!

Max. So! that will do now. Now, sir, stand up.
Don't twist your miserable body so.
Answer me: What is your wonderful secret?

Corv. Sire! I know who did it.

Max. What, booby?

Corv. The outrage on your Imperial edict!

Max. Who was it ?

Corv. Pancratius, a Christian. I found his knife
Under the pillar from which the edict was stolen.

Max. And why have you not seized him !

Corv. Twice to-day was I on his trail, but he escaped me.

Max. Let him not escape a third time
Or you may have to take his place.
How did you know the knife was his ?

Corv. He was my school-fellow under Cassianus,
Who turned out to be a Christian—

Max. Now, by the Infernal Gods ! A Christian teach my
subjects !

And he has had worthy scholars. Taught to
Pull down our Imperial edict, no doubt.
Where is this Cassianus ?

Corv. At present in Campania, with the ex-prefect Chromatius,
And others of the party—

Max. The ex-prefect, too ! What treachery !
What treason ! I shall not know next
In whom to trust ! Prefect, send some forthwith
To arrest Chromatius, and the schoolmaster,
And the whole abominable set—

Pref. Yes, sire ; but—

Max. Do it, I say. Spare no one.
Let me not see your face again
Till you report it done.

(*Exeunt* PREFECT and CORVINUS.)

Now it is supper time. Well ! well !
Christians ! Christians !—springing up on all sides.

Nothing but Christians ! But I'll show them
That Cæsar and not Christ rules in Rome !

(*Exit* MAXIMIAN.)

SCENE III — THE MAMERTINE PRISON.

PANCRATIUS *in chains.*

Enter SEBASTIAN.

Pancratius. Well, dear Sebastian, 'tis at hand you see :
The hour so long foreknown, so tremblingly
Yet deeply loved. Remember you, my friend,
The night when from your terrace-height we heard
The roar of savage beasts and saw from far
The gaping arches of the amphitheatre
Shaped like the Christian's crown ?

Sebastian. O, yes ! dear boy,
Full well I do remember me that night,
Methought your heart had then some foretaste,
Of what breaks for you with to-morrow's dawn.

Panc. It had, it had. Then felt I first the hope
That I might live to glut the roaring fury
Of those wild deputies of cruel men ;
And now the time is come. I scarce believe
One weak as I, not all unmeet to share
The honors of the valiant. What am I,
A poor and feeble boy—what have I done
To merit such a grace ?

Seb. You know, Pancratius,
Not he that wills nor he that runs excelleth,

But God the merciful makes choice of whom
He singles for His crowns! But tell me rather
How feel you now about to-morrow's fate?

Panc. As of a vision so magnificent,
So far beyond my right, above my aims,
That still it shows like some delicious dream,
Too fair for truth. Sebastian, can you grasp it
That I, shut up within these prison-walls,
Ere sets that sun which brings to-morrow's light,
Shall hear the melody of angel harps,
Walk with the white-rob'd saints, inhale
The perfume of celestial incense, drink
The crystal waters of the stream of life?

Seb. And naught beside?

Panc. More than I dare to name,
That I, a stripling, late exempt from school,
Should say and truly say—some time to-morrow
I shall behold whom angels love to look upon;
Behold Him, face to face, adore Him, kneel,
And at His hand receive a palm and crown;
And feel—O ecstasy!—His own embrace.
Ah! must I quit this hope? Yes, but for what?
For consummated bliss. Dearest Sebastian,
'Tis true! 'tis true!

Seb. And more! yea, more!

Panc. More still.

To close these weary eyes on crimes of men,
And ope them on the beatific vision;
To shut them on the thousand hideous looks

That frown the vengeance of the amphitheatre,
And on that bright intelligence unclothe them
Whose beams would blind us, did they not surround,
Burn, but that they embrace and welcome us !
To dart these eyes deep in the glowing fire
Of God's own heart, and plunge and nestle there.
Aw'd yet not stricken, lost yet not destroy'd,
This shall be mine to-morrow (*bell strikes*). Hark ! the sound
Of midnight from the Capitol. 'Tis day.

Seb. Happy Pancratius. You have still some hours to bide
in hope ?

Panc. And then how good of God
To grant me such a death ! The rage of beasts
And sinning men more frightened far than they,
The grin of scorn, the yell of fiendish hate,
The sight shall vanish from mine eyes ; these sounds
Fall on mine ear. Why should I fear to die ?
This world is dead while yet I live,
No look of love to lure me to its wiles,
No plaint of female voice to charm mine ears,
Just op'ning on the heav'nly harmonies.
One, only one there is whose parting glance
Will brace, and not unnerve ; whose dauntless voice
Cheer, not enfeeble. 'Tis agreed, my mother
Comes here at break of day. But, dearest friend,
The secrets that you long concealed from me
Wilt now reveal them. 'Tis our latest time.

Seb. What secrets dost thou refer to, my friend ?

Panc. When first the vision of this happy day

Woke on my thoughts while on the terrace height,
We mus'd on death that memorable eve
You spoke of something strong enough to check
Your zeal for martyrdom. Late you despatch'd
Me to Campania, for what cause you said not ;
And yet it seemed as though both secrets turned
On the same hinge, and bore a like intent.

Seb. In truth they did. To watch thee, dear Pancratius,
And fan the glowing zeal that finds to-day
Its finish'd work—this was thy friend's desire.
One fear did haunt him, lest with eager haste
Thou mightst anticipate and mar thy crown,
Or tip with passing blight one op'ning leaf
Of thy victorious palm. The bold exploit
Of tearing down the edict fed this fear.
'Twas then that, to forestall the dreaded ill,
I sent thee to Campania. Hadst thou then
In course of law suffer'd for that rash act,
Thou hadst been martyr still ; yet would thy sentence
Have told a civil crime, which now proclaims
A meek confessorship. The very heathens
Had pointed proudly at the gallant youth
Who dared insult the laws, and in thy conflict
Some selfish thought had, peradventure, dimm'd
The lustre of thy sacrifice, and snatched
Its brightest jewel from thy martyr's crown.
But when I saw thee, like a gentle lamb,
Torn from thy peaceful fold in loving mood,
Dragg'd through the streets, chained to a galley slave,

Pelted and hooted as believers are,
Charged with no crime against Rome's majesty
(Save that thou own'dst the hated name of Christian),
My task was o'er, thy glory consummated,
And what had I to do but leave the work
With him who had disposed it.

Panc. Dearest friend,
How like your love to that which God hath borne me.
How like His providence, which circles all,
Yet notes the tiny tenants of the air
And knows the number of the countless sand;
All clasping, all observing. Grant me now
To feel thee near me in the fight to-day,
That from my hands thou bear this legacy
To my sweet mother. 'Tis the blood wherewith
They marked me as my Savior's own.

Seb. Trust me,
I will not fail, e'en though it cost my life.
Farewell! We shall not be long parted. To-day
For thee, for me to-morrow.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.—THE EMPEROR'S COURT—MAXIMIAN—THE
PREFECT OF THE CITY—CORVINUS—FULVIUS—SEBAS-
TIAN—QUADRATUS, AND GUARDS.

Maximian. Well! of this enough.
We lavish favors freely upon all,
But from how few can we expect true service?
From soldiers only. Men true to the death.

Men such as thou, Sebastian ! (SEBASTIAN bows.)

But from the gownsmen who frequent a court,

Fawning for favors ; they are a base tribe.

Are they not, noble Fulvius ?

Fulvius. (*Drops on one knee.*) Sire, your reproach is just,

But not to me. I know I've ill requited

Your divinity's many liberal subsidies ;

But now, at last, I can redeem my pawned faith.

I have found the foulest treason, the most fell conspiracy

About your majesty's most sacred person !

Max. How, sirrah ! about our person ?

Speak ! or the words shall be drawn

From you with iron pincers —

Fulv. Sebastian is a Christian !

Max. Thou liest, thou dog ! The captain of my guard,

The very keeper of my inmost trust—

Thou shalt prove thy word, thou wretch !

Or die, as Christian scoundrel never died !

(SEBASTIAN steps forward.)

Sebastian. My liege, I spare you all trouble of proof ;

I am a Christian ! I glory in the name.

Max. Oh ! ye gods hear this ! Was ever man

So served ? Was ever Prince so betrayed ? One—one

Honored above all others, to join these infidel

Dogs who dishonor Rome, tear down our edict,

Undermine the state, plot against our very person !

One raised to honor, to trust, to the first rank.

Oh, ingrate ! viper ! scorpion ! what shall I call thee

Vile or bad enough ?

Seb. Hear me, my liege. In that I am a Christian
You have the best bond of my fidelity!

Max. Ingrate!

Seb. Listen, most noble Emperor. Where is fidelity?
'Twas this you asked a moment since.
I'll answer. Go to the prisons, strike the iron off
The Christian's limbs; he is enchained fidelity.
Go to the courts, unload the groaning rack.
From the arena and the tiger's jaws snatch
The maimed Christian; maimed man but whole
In faith. Believe me, sire, no legion in your pay
Can count as many loyal hearts as languish
In Roman prisons, charged only with their faith.
And further, this: they never can be true
To king or state, who do not, above all,
Fear, honor and obey the King of Kings.

Max. Folly and madness! I'd rather have a body guard
Of wolves than Christians. Your treachery is enough.

Seb. No traitor am I, royal Emperor. By night and day,
Guarded, unguarded, I had access to you.
If I were a traitor, the traitor's opportunity
Offered at every hour—

Max. Yet you concealed your creed.
You feared the bitter death due to your crime.

Seb. No, sire! Coward no more than traitor.
I had a duty to my brethern—for them I lived;
But hope had almost died within me.
Fulvius, I thank thee!
Thou hast spared me the sad choice

Of seeking death or bearing still a life

I earnestly desire to give away.

Max. Ho ! here, Quadratus ! Arrest your Tribune !

Do you hear ? What ! you hesitate ?

Quadratus. My liege, I, too, am a Christian.

Max. What, more of it ! Here, seize me that centurion !

Bear him away to instant execution.

(*They take out QUADRATUS.*)

But for this chief offender, take him to Hyphax.

The captain of my sure Numidian bowmen.

Bid them in Adonis' grove tie up this traitor,

And send an arrow into every joint,

And draw the treacherous blood from every pore,

And kill him, sense by sense and joint by joint,

Leaving the heart and brain to beat and burst

Until the last drop ebbs from out his veins.

Begone ! and answer with your lives for his.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE V.—A ROOM IN THE PREFECT'S HOUSE—CORVINUS
ON A BED IN A DISIURBED SLEEP.

DIONYSIUS. ATTENDANT.

Dionysius. If he sleep he may yet do well.

Attendant. He sleeps, indeed, but rests not. Mark you how he breathes, as though a mountain was on his breast ; every now and then he cries aloud, as if some terrible vision were chasing him.

Dion. How came he in this condition ?

Attend. This morning, as he was passing by the amphi-

theatre near the den where the wild beasts are kept up for the shows, he was driven by some mad humor (such as hath often seized him of late) to approach one of the biggest and liveliest of the panthers, and began addressing his speech to the dumb beast, and challenging it as if it had been a mortal man; the beast, provoked by his words and threats, turned upon him with a nimble spring, and buried its poisoned fangs in the fleshy part of his neck.

Dion. So envenomed a wound in so pampered and inflamed a body will go far to baffle the skill of the physician. But how hath your young master been affected since this accident?

Attend. He harps on one string incontinently, raving of a certain youth, his schoolmate, who was lately torn to pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

Dion. By name Pancrati^{us}?

Attend. The very same. He seems to note some marvellous similitude between the death of this youth and that by which himself is to die—at one time cursing him as his chief enemy; at another, seeming to respect him as a prophet.

Dion. (*Aside.*) Ha! I remember well; Prancrati^{us} did predict that his accuser, except he repented, would die a death like his own.

Attend. But the marvellous thing is how he starts and maddens at the sight and even the name of water. When he was bitten a fellow was near him, whom I half suspect to have been one of that hateful band of Christians. Whatever possessed this fellow I know not, but he must needs persist in tormenting my master about magical arts and ceremonies. It seemed to be about some kind of charmed water, which he

said was to heal him all at once ; but at the name of water Master Corvinus jumped up and sprung upon the other as if himself had been a panther, and I think for my part he served him right, for talking of such things to a sick man. But hist ! he wakes.

Corvinus. Water would they give me ! Water ! water ! No water for me !

Dion. Peace, foul spirits ! torment him not.

Corv. Not water, no ! It is fire ! I am on fire ! You there, who are you ? Are you Pancratius ? Put out the fire. Blow out that flame which is mounting to my head. Why don't you put it out, you coward ?

Dion. Merciful Lord, take pity on him.

Corv. Away, Pancratius, begone ! I cannot bear the sight of thee. Thou hast glared on me long enough. Keep back thy panther. Hold it fast. It comes, it comes ; it is on my throat. Oh, misery !

(*Dies.*)

Dion. Surely such a death were a great persuasion to a good life.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE VI.—NIGHT—THE HOUSE OF DIOGENES—DIOGENES AND A CHRISTIAN OF THE CITY.

Diogenes. So he really lives ! God is wonderful.

If I only had him here. Where is he concealed ?

Christian. (*In a low voice.*) Even in the palace on the Palatine.

In the apartment of that admirable lady, Irene !

He's resolute to confront Maximian—who thinks him dead—
To utter a last warning against the persecutor, and to die.

Diog. Noble Sebastian !

No earthly feeling, then, can change his purpose ?

Christ. Nay, he has none ; his soul is all in Heaven.
For worldly love or fame he deems them light
As summer dust. He sees his pathway clear,
And, living martyr as he truly is,
'Tis not for us to press our own desire
Against his higher knowledge

Diog. No, God forbid ! Those who soar so near Heaven,
My friend, take some of its light down with them,
Be sure. When shall I see you again ?

Christ. Right soon. I am for the Palatine, and if
I may I will penetrate to the martyr's presence
And get his blessing. Farewell for a little. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE VII.—IN FRONT OF PALATINE—A CROWD OF LIC-
TORS, GUARDS, &c.—SEBASTIAN, PALE AND BANDAGED,
APPEARS IN A GALLERY OVERLOOKING THE CROWD.

Lictors. Way for the divine Emperor !

*(MAXIMIAN slowly descends the steps. Petitions
are thrust forward on every side.)*

Sebastian. *(In a sepulchral voice.)* Maximian !

Maximian. Who art thou that so profane our name ?

Seb. One from the dead, come hither to confront thee !

Max. Sebastian !

Seb. A day of vengeance is at hand, Maximian.
Attend my words. Thou hast destroyed the just.
The blood of saints incarnadines thy hand.

The Tiber floats their bodies to the sea,
Or on the dunghill hast thou cast them out.
Thou hast defiled God's altar, robbed his poor,
Given virgins up to infamous assaults.
For this and thine own vices,
Pride—lewdness—avarice and oppression—
God has marked thee ! Thou shalt die
By violence, thou shalt perish as is meet,
And then God will raise up an Emperor,
One to protect His people, who shall rule
When thy name will be cursed throughout the earth.
Repent, unhappy prince. Beseech the Crucified,
The All-powerful, the All-merciful,
Him whom thou dost persecute—Him beseech to pardon thee.

Max. He lives, and lives to curse us !

Ah ! methought it was his ghost.

Ho, Hyphax ! Where is Hyphax ?

This comes of not permitting them to send

An arrow thro' his brain or heart at first.

You hear, my clubmen ? Bring that traitor down.

(SEBASTIAN *is brought in between two clubmen.*)

Yonder on one side a little. Don't stain my palace steps.

Dash me his brains out. So shall all Christians perish,

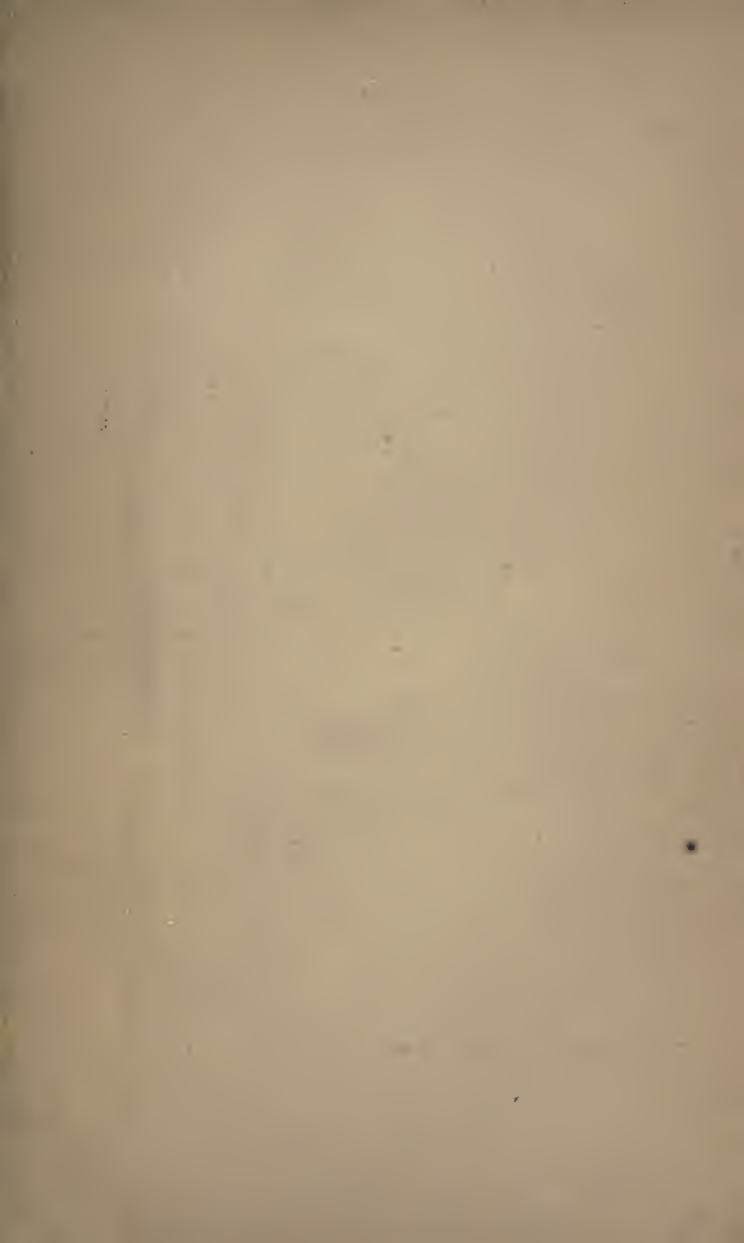
And all confess the omnipotence of Cæsar.

Seb. (*As they drag him out.*) Maximian, repent !

Cæsar is not God. And we, my fellow-Christians, if there be
any here,

Remember we must serve God rather than Cæsar.

(*Curtain falls.*)





Rare
Book.
Room



